

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Look Him Straight in the Eye: The Oregon Dispute with Great Britain

Standard: II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. People, Places, and Environments
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:

- Study the Anglo-American dispute over the Oregon Country
- Determine the reasons for possession by the U.S. and Great Britain
- Apply rationale for possession to a political cartoon
- Explore the impact of Manifest Destiny on boundaries
- Evaluate the diplomatic resolution of a dispute

Time: 1–2 class periods

Materials: Document: **1846** *Treaty with Great Britain in Regard to the Limits Westward of the Rocky Mountains*

Exercises: *Look Him Straight in the Eye: Eagle v. Lion*
Dialogue for an Oregon Cartoon

Resources: *Cartoon: "What you Young Yankee-Noodle, Strike Your Own Father?"*
Map: The Oregon Dispute
Oregon Treaty Geography Cards
Oregon Country Cut-out

Procedures:

1. Review terms, "Manifest Destiny" and "expansionism", with students.
2. Collect background information, refer to textbooks, and have students read about the Oregon Trail, Willamette Valley, Hudson's Bay Company, "Fifty-four, Forty or Fight," 49th Parallel, James K. Polk.
3. Distribute copies of *Look Him Straight in the Eye: Eagle v. Lion* and the document, *Treaty with Great Britain in Regard to the Limits Westward of the Rocky Mountains*, and *Map: The Oregon Dispute*. Using background information and these sources, have students complete the questions in *The Eagle and the Lion* hand-out.
4. Compare answers and discuss the key issues involved with each country in settling the Oregon dispute.

- a. Why did both sides want to avoid a war, despite the bellicose urgings of some citizens and political figures?
 - b. How did each country achieve a measure of dignity in terms of territory gained?
 - c. Explain the resolution from the perspective that "diplomacy trumped war."
5. Provide copies of the political cartoon, "*What? You Young Yankee-Noodle, Strike Your Own Father?*" Explain that the cartoon is from *London Punch*, 1846, a British weekly magazine of humor and satire first published in 1841.
6. Analyze the cartoon with these questions:
 - a. What appears to be the relationship between England and America?
 - b. Describe England as the cartoonist viewed his country (represented by the larger man). Describe the characteristics attributed to America as depicted by the other man.
 - c. What do the props or items with each man represent? (*Note:* America has a slave driver's whip in his back pocket and is smoking a cigar.)
 - d. What message is England sending to America with this cartoon?
7. Provide the exercise, *Dialogue for an Oregon Cartoon*. Place students in small groups and fill in the conversation bubbles. Use relevant information previously garnered about the Oregon dispute. The dialogue can represent feelings during the dispute or after the resolution of the dispute. Have each group read their conversations. What are the common themes? Are any of the conversations conciliatory in tone? Based on these conversations, would diplomacy or war more likely have resolved the dispute between the United States and Great Britain?

Extension Activities:

1. Refer to activity, *Walk the Line: The Webster–Ashburton Treaty*.
2. Use the masking tape boundary between the United States and Canada as established by the "Walk the Line" activity.
3. Extend the masking tape boundary to the Pacific Ocean. Have students place the following Geography Cards on the floor map:
 - 49th Parallel
 - 54°40' Parallel

What is the significance of each parallel?

4. Place the outline of the Oregon Country on the floor map.

- 5.** What was the final boundary established for Oregon? Have a student draw a red line along this boundary. (Explain that the Oregon territory/country included almost half of British Columbia and the American states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and portions of Montana and Wyoming.)
- 6.** Discuss the significance of gaining this territory. What was its value to the United States?
- 7.** Have students review the boundaries established along the north between the United States and Canada. Reexamine all of the red lines previously established in the activity, "Walk the Line."
- 8.** Assess the diplomatic methods used by the United States and Great Britain to establish all of these boundaries peacefully. ■